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Published September 21, 2006

Testimony: Ricky was friendly but defiant

Teacher says child showed signs of behavioral issues

By Kevin Grasha
Lansing State Journal

What's next

- Lisa Holland's murder trial continues today in Ingham County Circuit Court. Expected to testify are psychologist Dr. Jerel Del Dotto, foster care worker Theresa Bronsberg, the driver of Ricky's special education bus as well as the bus driver's assistant and Jackson Public Schools transportation supervisor Craig Frazier.

A portrait of Ricky Holland as an energetic, talkative and sometimes difficult young boy is emerging as testimony continues in the murder trial of his mother.

A Jackson psychometrist on Wednesday described a 3-year-old Ricky as "friendly immediately," "somewhat squirmy" and eager to please Lisa Holland.

But Ricky's Head Start teacher that same year said he also could be defiant and aggressive, and that he went through a three-week phase where he would kick or swing at teachers.

Lisa Holland is charged with murder and child abuse in Ricky's July 2005 death. Her husband, Tim Holland, has pleaded guilty to second-degree murder and is expected to testify against her. Lisa's attorneys say Tim's plea was intended solely to protect himself.

Zandra Galloway on Wednesday testified she administered neuropsychological testing in 2001 when Ricky was about 3 1/2 years old; it showed he was developing appropriately for his age. The Hollands were Ricky's foster parents at the time; they eventually adopted him.

Galloway told Lisa Holland's co-counsel Andrew Abood she believed Ricky had a positive relationship with his mother, and she never suspected child abuse.

Galloway, however, noted Ricky asked her several times: "Can you tell Momma I did a good job?"

She told Assistant Prosecutor Mike Ferency the statement seemed significant because Ricky said it more than once.

Also Wednesday, Barbara Patrick, Ricky's Head Start teacher during the 2000-01 school year, said Lisa asked her to provide daily reports of Ricky's behavior. Patrick eventually refused.

Patrick also testified Lisa Holland once asked her if she knew if Ricky would qualify for governmental financial assistance if he had attention deficit (hyperactivity) disorder or oppositional defiant disorder.

Ferency said in opening arguments that Lisa was using Ricky for financial gain.

But Patrick also described several symptoms Ricky displayed that indicated he suffered from behavioral issues, including attention-span problems and hyperactivity.

"He requires several reminders for almost all directions," Patrick wrote in a report.

A child psychiatrist eventually diagnosed Ricky with several conditions, including attention deficit (hyperactivity) disorder and bipolar disorder.

Also Wednesday, a Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Michigan official testified Ricky continued to receive prescription medication months after his last visit to a doctor.

The last doctor visit billed for Ricky was July 9, 2004, said Andrew Palmer of Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Michigan.

But prescriptions were filled months afterward: two on Aug. 17, 2004, and two on Nov. 9, 2004.

Aboud suggested it was possible that Lisa Holland could have paid cash for subsequent visits to a doctor and they wouldn't show up in insurance records.

Contact Kevin Grasha at 267-1347 or kgrasha@lsj.com.

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This is a printer friendly version of an article from **The Detroit News**
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September 21, 2006

Witness: Ricky had no signs of abuse

Karen Bouffard / The Detroit News

LANSING -- Ricky Holland was polite, friendly and seemed to have a good relationship with the adoptive mother accused of killing him, a psychiatric testing specialist testified in her trial Wednesday.

A prosecution witness, Zandra Galloway, acknowledged under cross-examination she "noticed no signs of child abuse on Ricky, either mental or physical" when she evaluated him shortly after the state placed him in the care of Lisa and Tim Holland in 2001.

Lisa Holland, 34, is on trial for murder and child abuse before Ingham County Circuit Judge Paula Manderfield. The Williamston couple declared the 7-year-old boy missing in July 2005, and Tim Holland led police to his body in January. He pleaded guilty to second-degree murder this month and will testify against his wife.

Galloway said she believed that Ricky's behavior indicated he had a good relationship with his foster mother and had bonded with her. The Hollands later adopted Ricky.

"He was eager to please his mom," said Galloway, an employee at Foote Hospital in Jackson, where the family lived then.

Assistant Prosecutor Michael Ferency told jurors in opening remarks Monday that Lisa Holland abused Ricky for years and manipulated doctors into falsely diagnosing him with severe mental impairments to get higher state foster care and adoption subsidies from the state.

The couple received \$907 per month in adoption subsidies for Ricky, which included \$405 per month in extra payments for caring for a "special needs" child, according to testimony Tuesday by the state Department of Human Services.

The trial continues today with testimony from Ricky's psychiatrist and state foster care worker.

You can reach Karen Bouffard at (734) 462-2206 or kbouffard@detnews.com.

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ourMidland.com
from the Midland Daily News

09/20/2006

Our View: You can help, too

Reading Reporter Kelly Nankervis' heartwarming story Tuesday concerning Randy and Pam Streu of Midland, winners of the Angel of Adoption Award and foster parents to 49 children since 1994, makes us realize that there is a lot of good being done in this community.

And recognizing that the Congressional Coalition on Adoption Institute gives out 180 of these awards nationwide, we realize, too, there is a lot of good being done across the United States.

The story moved others as well. Nankervis reported today that six people had responded to her sidebar story "More foster families needed" by calling foster care coordinator Michelle Bell by 3:30 p.m. Tuesday.

Bell explained how people who want to give back to their community can help out by being foster parents for children who are removed from abusive or neglectful family situations.

The award, presented by U.S. Rep. Dave Camp, recognizes extraordinary work people do on behalf of children in foster care, and those who participate in the adoption process. The Streus have adopted seven children in their care over the years.

While the Streus certainly deserve the award, we know they are not participating in the foster care system seeking recognition. Pam Streu told us why they serve.

"I think being a foster parent is awesome," she said. "That's why we're here, to make a difference."

And you can too by contacting Bell at mbell@co.midland.mi.us or by calling 832-6398.

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Foster parents accept challenge

Wednesday, September 20, 2006

By Shannon Maynard

For the Citizen Patriot

Most agree parenting has its difficult moments. But caring for someone else's children introduces a unique set of challenges.

For Dot Manthei those challenges are well worth it.

"(Being a foster parent) is the best job ever," she said. "There's no such thing as a throw-away child. All children are important. It's the most worthwhile job you could ever do."

Manthei, 75, and her husband, Jerry, 77, became foster parents nearly 20 years ago. Although the Mantheis had raised their own children, Dot realized she still had something maternal to offer.

"I love kids and babies," she said. "I had an empty nest and I wanted something to do."

Tanda Reynolds, director at the Department of Human Services in Jackson, is grateful for their ability to continually provide a nurturing home to a wide range of children.

"(The Mantheis) are reliable. We can count on them to provide consistency, love and stability to the infants and special needs children (they care for)," Reynolds said. "They also have the unique ability to work with the biological families."

Although Dot Manthei enjoys caring for children in need, her time as a foster parent has forced her to see a side of life she didn't realize existed.

During their time as foster parents, the Mantheis have cared for more than 50 children, ages zero to 10. Some they have had in their home for years, some for just hours.

Regardless of the challenges presented by caring for the children, Manthei hopes she is having an impact on their lives.

"I hope (caring for them) makes them a better citizen when they grow up," she said. "Anything you can do to help a child, makes them better."

They have been married for 57 years. They have five children, nine grandchildren and 12 great-grandchildren.

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Half-sister may testify in Rose Kelley case

FLINT

THE FLINT JOURNAL FIRST EDITION

Wednesday, September 20, 2006

By Ron Fonger

rfonger@flintjournal.com • 810.766.6317

FLINT - Rose Kelley's 10-year-old half-sister might be the key witness about life inside an east-side rental house where police say four children lived among lice, fleas and dog feces before one died.

With 5-year-old Rose gone, her death ruled a homicide by the Oakland County medical examiner, Assistant Genesee County Prosecutor Marcie M. Mabry said Tuesday that the surviving sibling might be called as a kind of "historian to what happened in the house."

Rose's parents - Michelle L. Bowen and Jeffery C. Kelley - are facing an Oct. 25 trial before Genesee Probate Judge Robert E. Weiss to decide whether they will lose their parental rights. Weiss also could decide to end the parental rights of Jeffrey Mitchell, the father of the 10-year-old, Bowen's oldest child.

Weiss, Mabry and attorneys for the children and parents began talking at a pretrial hearing Tuesday about special arrangements that might be made for Rose's half-sister, including prohibitions against filming, photographing or naming the little girl, who could testify by closed-circuit television.

Mabry said prosecutors avoid testimony by children when possible because it can be devastating emotionally, particularly if what they say is emotionally or legally harmful to their parents.

But the girl's testimony in this case may be valuable because of a lack of other eyewitnesses to the deterioration of Rose's health. Medical Examiner Ljubisa J. Dragovic has said Rose died from liver failure compounded by neglect.

Sick for five days, Rose was never taken to a doctor. Mabry said she wants to hear from Rose's sister about what she saw in the days leading to the child's June 3 death in the family's N. Franklin Avenue home.

A 6-year-old brother's disability prevents him from helping, while another sister in the home is only 2. Neighbors have said they rarely saw the children and weren't invited inside the home.

Bowen and Jeffery Kelley were in court Tuesday but said nothing and declined to comment through their attorneys afterward.

Wearing a print dress, Bowen swiveled in her chair during the hearing while Kelley listened quietly, his hands folded in front of him.

Mitchell was not at Tuesday's hearing.

Attorneys for Bowen and Kelley told Weiss that they have an expert who is reviewing the circumstances of Rose's death and is waiting for more information from the medical examiner.

QUICK TAKE

What's happening in the Rose Kelley case?

- At a pretrial hearing Tuesday, Genesee Probate Judge Robert E. Weiss made no changes to an order that Rose Kelley's parents have no contact with their surviving children. Rose died June 3 in what police and caseworkers have described as an unsanitary, lice-infested home on Flint's east side.

- A trial to end the parental rights of Michelle L. Bowen, Jeffrey Mitchell and Jeffery C. Kelley is scheduled for Oct. 25. Bowen was the mother of Rose and three other children, Mitchell is the father of her oldest child, and Kelley is the father of Bowen's three youngest children.

- The case remains under review by Genesee County Prosecutor David Leyton, but no criminal charges have been filed.

Craig Sippell, Bowen's attorney, said testimony from Rose's half-sister shouldn't be necessary, and family members told him they worried about the effect it could have on the girl.

"I can't prevent it," Sippell said after the hearing. "I don't like it, (but) we really don't have a choice."

An attorney for the child said she filed a notice of intent Tuesday to make special accommodations for the girl's testimony, possibly including the use of closed-circuit television.

"She's only 10 years old. If we could be back in chambers, ... we can make it easier," said Trina Carte, who has been appointed to represent the surviving children.

Without specifying guidelines Tuesday, Weiss said he wants "to be careful she doesn't get traumatized."

"We're here to protect her," the judge said.

Police have said Bowen told them she feared her children would be taken from her once people saw Rose's condition, which included severe head lice and possible malnourishment.

The case has attracted statewide attention because the Department of Human Services had contact with the family in 2003 and 2004 for issues of chronic head lice and medical neglect, but the children remained with their parents.

The Office of Children's Ombudsman has cleared DHS of any wrongdoing in the death.

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Ricky last saw doctor about a year before he died, official testifies

By Kevin
Grasha,
Lansing
State
Journal

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Ricky Holland



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Lansing - Ricky Holland continued to receive medication months after his last visit to a

doctor, according to testimony this morning on the third day of Lisa Holland's trial.

The last doctor visit billed for Ricky was July 9, 2004, a Blue Cross/Blue Shield of Michigan official testified.

But prescriptions were filled for months afterward: two on Aug. 17, 2004, and two on Nov. 9, 2004. The medications were picked up at a pharmacy in Jackson, where the Hollands lived at the time.

Ricky had been diagnosed with several conditions including attention deficit (hyperactivity) disorder and bipolar disorder. He died at the age of 7 about a year after that doctor visit.

Lisa Holland's co-counsel, Andrew Aboud, suggested it was possible that she could have paid cash for subsequent visits to a doctor. Lisa is charged with murder and child abuse in Ricky's death.

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Also Tuesday, testimony revealed that Ricky had neuropsychological testing when he was 3 and a half that showed he was developing normally.

The evaluator at Foote Hospital in Jackson described Ricky as pleasant, cooperative, "friendly immediately," very talkative, and eager to please Lisa Holland.

Ricky asked the evaluator several times: "Can you tell Momma I did a good job?"

-- Web Editor: [John Bumgardner](#), Assignment Desk

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House passes bill to move children's ombudsman office

9/20/2006, 6:32 p.m. ET

The Associated Press

LANSING, Mich. (AP) — A bill that would move an office charged with assuring children's safety in Michigan from the executive branch to the legislative branch passed the state House on Wednesday.

The bill, which now goes to the Senate, would affect the office of the Children's Ombudsman. The bill passed the House by a 67-40 vote, with nine Democrats joining the Republican majority in supporting the bill.

The ombudsman's office investigates child safety and social services cases and makes recommendations to improve the system. The office is designed to be independent, but some say there is a potential conflict of interest because the ombudsman is affiliated with state departments whose policies and actions it may review.

Democratic Gov. Jennifer Granholm's office and the state Department of Human Services have said the ombudsman's office already is independent. The ombudsman appointment is made by the governor, but is subject to approval by the state Senate.

Some Democrats say shifting the office to the legislative branch could compromise confidentiality and make the system more political.

The legislation follows hearings conducted by the House Special Committee on Child Protection. The committee began investigating child safety after the deaths of 7-year-old Ricky Holland of Williamston and other children.

The bill's sponsor, Republican Rep. David Law of Commerce Township, has been frustrated he has not received some records he has requested on the Holland case from the ombudsman.

"The system is set up wrong and is not working," Law said in a statement. "We need to fix the cracks in the system immediately so more children are not harmed."

DHS Director Marianne Udow has said prosecutors have told her office and Ombudsman Verlie Ruffin they cannot release records in an ongoing case.

Rep. Brenda Clack, a Democrat from Flint, said the bill could compromise confidentiality in cases and could make the office operate less independently.

Republican House Speaker Craig DeRoche of Novi said in a statement that Democrats who opposed the bill are "more interested in protecting their at-risk governor than the kids who truly need our help."

Granholm faces re-election this November against Republican challenger Dick DeVos.

Democrats who joined the Republican majority in supporting bill were Glenn Anderson of Westland, Kathy Angerer of Dundee, Pam Byrnes of Chelsea, Marie Donigan of Royal Oak, John Espinoza of Croswell, Gary McDowell of Rudyard, Joel Sheltrown of West Branch, Dudley Spade of Tipton and Carl Williams of Saginaw.

The children's ombudsman bill is House Bill 6440.

On the Net:

Published September 21, 2006
[From Lansing State Journal]

Thursday's letters to editor

Eye for an eye?

One has to wonder how Tim Holland can live with himself. If a mere fraction of his testimony regarding how Ricky was treated while living with these "monsters" is true, where is his basic, human compassion for another living, breathing person?

How many opportunities did Tim have to do the right thing over the course of Ricky's brief, tortured lifetime? Did he ever do anything to stop the repeated brutality and abuse?

Perhaps both of the Hollands deserve the same type of care and concern that they provided for Ricky. Torturers may think twice if the punishment was equal to the crime. Shame on both of them and anyone else who knew, yet did nothing. What on Earth is wrong with these people?

Robbyn Blackman
Lansing

House Passes Ombudsman Change

MIRS, Wednesday, September 20, 2006

Today, nine Democrats joined House Republicans in voting for legislation that would move the state's child ombudsman office from the executive branch to the legislative branch.

The bill, HB 6440, passed the House, 67-40, this afternoon and may have enough shelf-life to seriously be considered by the Senate in its lame duck session. Short term, the bill is a political plus for its sponsor, Rep. David [LAW](#) (R-Commerce Twp.), and could serve Republicans generally as something to point toward while taking the Gov. Jennifer [GRANHOLM](#) administration to task for recent highly publicized failures in the state's child protection system.

"On a plan to reform our state's child protection system, there should be unanimous support on the floor of the Michigan House," said House Speaker Craig [DeROCHE](#) (R-Novi). "Instead, my Democrat colleagues are more interested in protecting their at-risk Governor than the kids who truly need our help.

From a practical standpoint, there seems to be virtually no chance the legislation would avoid Granholm's veto pen if it were to reach her desk. What's more, the prospect that Republican gubernatorial candidate Dick **DeVOS** or any prospective governor would completely sign on to a measure transferring authority of this sort from the executive branch seems unlikely.

At most, the legislation could provide a modicum of additional pressure in the protracted and thus far irregular efforts by the Legislature to edge the child ombudsman office toward more of a role as watchdog and whistleblower over the child protection bureaucracy, rather than being protective of the bureaucracy itself.

"How many more children need to die in the system before we admit it's not working?" Law asked in his floor speech on behalf of the bill. "We need an ombudsman office that is not part of the same department it's supposed to investigate."

But Democrats who opposed the bill said it could potentially compromise personal confidentiality and argued that the Legislature doesn't have a great track record for keeping ombudsman posts intact.

"Protecting confidentiality is one of the keys to success in this (the ombudsman) office," said Rep. Brenda [CLACK](#) (D-Flint). "Let's not be put in a position where the confidential information of families are the topic of conversation at everybody's dinner table."

"We've (the Legislature) had a DOC ombudsman," said Rep. Virgil [SMITH](#) (D-Detroit). "But in 2003 we got rid of the DOC ombudsman."

The House Republican news release on passage of [HB 6440](#) was hard-hitting.

"The Children's Ombudsman issued a letter this summer stating that the state Department of Human Services 'facilitated timely and appropriate preventive and support services to the family' of Rose **KELLEY**, who was 5 when she was found dead, infested with lice in a home filled with feces and garbage.

"The letter was an outrage considering the circumstances surrounding the death of this little girl," DeRoche said in the release. "Democrats had a chance today to provide a voice for Rose, for Ricky (**HOLLAND**) and all the children who have died recently, but they chose to look the other way."

The Democrats who voted for [HB 6440](#) today are, without exception, running in politically competitive districts this fall. They include: Reps. Glenn [ANDERSON](#) (D-Westland), Kathy [ANGERER](#) (D-Dundee), Pam [BYRNES](#) (D-Chelsea), Marie [DONIGAN](#) (D-Royal Oak), John [ESPINOZA](#) (D-Croswell), Gary [McDOWELL](#) (D-Rudyard), Joel [SHELTROWN](#) (D-West Branch), Dudley [SPADE](#) (D-Tipton) and Carl [WILLIAMS](#) (D-Saginaw).

House Passes Welfare Drug Testing Bill

MIRS, Wednesday, September 20, 2006

This evening, the House passed [HB 6481](#), legislation that would require welfare recipients to be drug tested if there was reasonable suspicion that the recipient was under the influence of illegal drugs.

The bill, which appears to be primarily a late election-year talking point for its sponsor, Rep. Leslie [MORTIMER](#) (R-Horton), who seems to be struggling in her re-election bid, came out of committee Wednesday and was introduced last week (See "[Welfare Drug Testing Bill Moves](#)," 09/19/06).

Prior to tonight's vote, Democratic staffers assured *MIRS* the House Democrats were ready to avoid any "bad" votes on the bill, which could be used against them in marginal district races. They did so, with fear that the bill would even become law or be an awkward problem for Gov. Jennifer [GRANHOLM](#) prior to the election, since the vote took place after midnight, numerous hours after the Senate had left for the remainder of the post-election season.

The vote on [HB 6481](#) was 82-25.

High points in the debate leading up to the vote included Rep. Steve [TOBOCMAN](#) (D-Detroit) once again arguing, as he had in committee, that it made as much sense to require drug tests of lawmakers, applicants for government-backed housing loans and students on scholarships as it would to require the testing for welfare recipients, especially since the state already has a similar program in place that complies with court rulings on the subject.

Rep. Paul [CONDINO](#) (D-Southfield) caused more than a few eyebrows to be raised when he asked that the bill sponsor explain her legislation. Condino was inferring that Mortimer had been given the bill by House leadership and might have a little trouble explaining it, especially if critical questions were raised, such as funding of such a program.

Mortimer did not rise to make an explanation.

"I think we got our answer," Condino said.

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September 21, 2006

Juvenile facility downsized

Panel OKs revamped plan with 50 fewer beds; matter goes before the county board tonight.

Christina Stolarz / The Detroit News

MACOMB COUNTY -- A downsized version of the Macomb County Juvenile Justice Center -- complete with 50 fewer beds to house young offenders -- is one step closer to reality.

The county's Budget Committee approved modifications Wednesday to the facility that call for a total of 140 beds instead of the planned 190 beds, along with the demolition of the residential and administrative areas of the old facility.

Center officials say they no longer need as many beds because the state is instead placing abused and neglected kids in foster care. Also, they plan to release some kids back to their homes sooner with the help of community-based programs.

"If we don't have to put a child in a youth home who was abused or neglected, hallelujah," said Commissioner Philis DeSaele, R-Sterling Heights. To do so, she said, sends the child the wrong message.

The matter will go before the County Board of Commissioners at 7 tonight at the Administration Building, 1 S. Main, Mount Clemens. If approved, architects must finish the scaled-back design of the building with only 140 beds -- 80 designated for detention and 60 set aside for treatment -- before they go out for bid.

The scaled-back version will only add \$2.3 million to the facility's initial \$19.2 million price tag, said Charles Seidelman, director of the juvenile justice center.

It would have cost at least an additional \$4 million to have a 190-bed facility.

"It's most cost-effective at this point in time," he said. "We know we can do the job right. The mission is public safety and working with children."

The new facility, which opened in September 2004, is completely secured and being built next to the old one in Mount Clemens. The design allows for a 60-bed expansion if the need arises, Seidelman said.

There are 120 beds at the facility; the other 20 will be available upon completion of the project in 1.5-2 years, he said.

You can reach Christina Stolarz at (586) 468-0343 or cstolarz@detnews.com.

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House passes bill to drug test some welfare recipients

LANSING, Mich. -- Some welfare recipients suspected of illegal drug use could be tested under legislation approved early Thursday in the Michigan House.

It's the latest attempt by House Republicans to change some conditions of the state welfare system. The bill, passed just before lawmakers adjourned until after the November election, will go to the Senate for consideration when lawmakers return to the Capitol.

The bill cleared the House on a 82-25 vote, with some Democrats joining majority Republicans in supporting the bill.

The bill would allow for drug testing of a family assistance recipient if a Department of Human Services employee has a reasonable suspicion the recipient has been using drugs. The bill calls for DHS to set up a pilot program to test the measure.

Welfare recipients testing positive for drug use would be required to enter a treatment program. If they don't conform to the treatment program requirements, they eventually could lose some of their welfare benefits.

Democrats said the legislation wasn't needed because state could give drug tests to welfare recipients now. Republicans said the Democratic administration of Gov. Jennifer Granholm has not done that.

The 25 Democrats voting against the bill were Doug Bennett of Muskegon, Steve Bieda of Warren, Marsha Cheeks of Detroit, Brenda Clack of Flint, Paul Condino of Southfield, George Cushingberry of Detroit, Barbara Farrah of Southgate, Matt Gillard of Alpena, Lee Gonzales of Flint, Morris Hood of Detroit, Hoon-Yung Hopgood of Taylor, Tupac Hunter of Detroit, Chris Kolb of Ann Arbor, Gabe Leland of Detroit, LaMar Lemmons Jr. of Detroit, Bill McConico of Detroit, Andy Meisner of Ferndale, Fred Miller of Mount Clemens, Mike Murphy of Lansing, Jim Plakas of Garden City, Alma Wheeler Smith of Ypsilanti, Virgil Smith of Detroit, Steve Tobocman of Detroit, Aldo Vagnozzi of Farmington Hills and Mary Waters of Detroit.

Lawmakers and representatives of organizations interested in a cable television competition bill bargained for several hours Wednesday but the House did not take a final vote on the issue. Some lawmakers were hoping to vote on the bill before the House left for its election break, but it became clear by about 11:30 p.m. Wednesday that parts of the proposal had not been worked out.

Republican House Speaker of Craig DeRoche of Novi and House Democratic Leader Dianne Byrum of Onondaga, however, said they were in agreement about the bill and they expected it to pass by the end of the year. In a show of bipartisan support, lawmakers adopted a substitute of the original bill on a 101-6 vote early Thursday.

Both DeRoche and Byrum said the bill will be good for Michigan's economic development and give consumers more choice. The bill is designed to increase competition in the cable industry and help phone companies roll out new video services.

Cable companies historically have had to secure individual licenses, or franchises, from each of the cities and towns where they want to do business. The legislation developing in the House would make those local agreements more uniform across the state.

Supporters say it would provide more competition and perhaps keep cable prices in check.

Local governments have opposed some of the proposed changes. But lawmakers have been working on those concerns, including provisions to make sure low-income residents in a community could get new services and that local access channels would remain available.

The welfare drug testing bill is House Bill 6481. The cable bill is House Bill 6456.

On the Net:

Michigan Legislature: <http://legislature.mi.gov>

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News

Nitz supports drug testing as welfare benefits condition

Wednesday, September 20, 2006 10:56 AM EDT

LANSING - Michigan welfare recipients who are suspected of substance abuse may have to submit to a drug test under welfare reform legislation approved Tuesday in the House Government Operations Committee, announced Dowagiac Rep. Neal Nitz.

Under House Bill 6481, the Department of Human Services may require a welfare recipient to submit to a drug test if the department employee has reasonable suspicion of substance abuse by the recipient.

"Michigan's welfare system is available for residents who need help getting their lives back in order to become more self-sufficient," said Nitz, R-Baroda. "This legislation is an important step that will prevent substance abuse, keep kids safe from drug exposure and insure welfare recipients aren't taking advantage of taxpayer dollars to purchase or use drugs."

The department will implement a pilot program of substance abuse testing as a condition for assistance eligibility, according to a protocol that includes all of the following steps:

€ The department administers a substance abuse survey.

€ A substance abuse professional screens the individual for suspicion of substance abuse using an empirically validated screening tool in one-on-one contact.

€ The substance abuse professional gathers additional information about the individual, including information from a drug-screening test.

€ The substance abuse professional determines the level of treatment needed and makes the appropriate referral.

"This legislation will provide us with an additional opportunity to refer welfare recipients to a rehabilitation program if it is needed for them to get back on their feet," Nitz said.

"Similar testing is done before an employee is hired for a job. Michigan's welfare program is essential for assisting needy families and is not a program that supports drug habits."

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Article published Sep 21, 2006

Information fair touches on many facets of domestic violence

The Enquirer

Resources to help survivors, families, friends, loved ones and anyone interested in eliminating domestic violence will be available at the fifth annual Domestic Violence Information Fair from 2 to 7 p.m. Oct. 5 in the Crowell School gym, 1418 Cooper St., Albion.

The event is being held in recognition of October as Domestic Violence Awareness Month, but has broadened its scope to include other areas of interest.

"We're not targeting it just to domestic violence victims this year," said Elaine Lohrke, Albion's personal protection order coordinator. "We'll have information there for senior citizens, for child care and for people looking for jobs."

Even the Humane Society will participate in the event.

"It's a little-known fact that a lot of domestic violence victims will not leave their home because they have a pet and they're afraid the animal will be hurt or killed," Lohrke said. "So now anyone who goes to a safe house, the Humane Society will take care of that pet while they're at the shelter, up to 30 days."

Because many people are very attached to their pets, knowing the animal will be safe can compel them to take action, Lohrke said.

"It makes the difference between someone staying and getting hurt again or getting out."

For more information about the information fair, call the Albion Public Safety Department at 517-629-3933.

Potential adoptive couples sought

ESCANABA — Catholic Charities of the Upper Peninsula is looking for married couples who may be interested in adopting a child. Those couples who would like to know more about open adoption are required to attend an orientation session in October. Catholic Charities serves people of all faiths.

The orientation will take place on Tuesday, Oct. 10, from 9 a.m. to noon at the Escanaba office of Catholic Charities, which is located at 1401 North 26th Street, Suite 116.

Pre-registration for the orientation session is required. To register or obtain more information, call Diane Casey, LMSW, at (906) 786-7212. Casey is the child welfare worker and branch director of the Escanaba Catholic Charities' office.

A continuation of the training process is scheduled for Tuesdays, Oct. 24 and 31, from 9 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. at the same location. The attendance of both the husband and wife at all three sessions is expected.

"Catholic Charities is looking for couples who are open to exploring the risks of an open adoption," explained Linda Kearney, LMSW, Child Welfare Supervisor at Catholic Charities of the U.P. "Generally, once families discover the benefits to all involved in the adoption process, they become enthusiastic supporters of openness."

Couples who want to adopt a child need to have been married for at least three years and be at least 25 years of age. The program is open to those who have adopted a child previously or who may have a biological child but have experienced secondary infertility and are exploring an adoption option.

In open adoption, the birth parents select an adoptive couple from those on the adoption waiting list, all of whom have been studied and trained for the open adoption experience. Together, the birth parents and adoptive families establish what type of future relationship they wish to have with the child and each other.

Catholic Charities has over 50 years of experience in child welfare, including 16 years with an emphasis on providing the open adoption option. The nonprofit agency is partially funded by the Upper Peninsula Catholic Services Appeal, the United Way and client fees.

Catholic Charities also has extensive experience in conducting independent home studies in a timely manner for families interested in international or out-of-state adoptions.

Couples or individuals seeking more information about home studies should contact Diane Casey at (906) 786-7212.

Michigan Report

September 20, 2006

MICHIGAN FALLS TO LAST PLACE IN UNEMPLOYMENT RATE

Michigan, with an August unemployment rate of 7.1 percent, fell to a tie for last place among all states in that category, the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics reported Wednesday. Mississippi, still dealing with the aftershocks of Hurricane Katrina, also registered a 7.1 percent jobless rate for the month, but it recorded one of the largest drops in the rate compared to the month before: 1.1 percentage points.

Michigan's rate was slightly higher than in July, but the BLS monthly report also said it had the second largest gain in employment in August at 17,900, behind leader California's increase of 36,900 in a state with more than three times as large a workforce.

Republican gubernatorial candidate Dick DeVos, saying the numbers show the economic recovery plans by Governor Jennifer Granholm are not working, said, "This is sad news for Michigan. The real story here is not the numbers, the real story is all of the Michigan families that are hurting. I will fight to turn our economy around so that working families can keep good paying jobs."

Granholm spokesperson Liz Boyd said the state's jobless rate has been statistically relatively even for some time and while it is higher than the governor would hope, "It is a direct reflection of the challenges facing the auto industry which has been hurt by the (President George W.) Bush policies." She added the governor's plan does address creating jobs now and for diversifying the economy "and that plan is beginning to pay dividends."

September 20, 2006

HOUSE OK'S WELFARE DRUG TESTING IN WRAP-UP SESSION

Completing nearly 13 hours session just before 1 a.m. Thursday, which included a call of the House during Wednesday's session, the chamber finalized bills requiring welfare recipients to undergo drug testing, transferring the Office of Children's Ombudsman to the Legislative Service Bureau and allowing schools to initiate student body protection orders.

The drug testing bill, [HB 6481](#) which was approved 82-25, had some Democrats saying that the \$750 cost of a drug test would be better used toward substance abuse treatment.

[Rep. Steve Tobocman](#) (D-Detroit) repeated his call delivered earlier this week in committee that all individuals getting public dollars undergo drug tests, including sitting lawmakers, college students and those who receive housing development loans. That brought on cheers from his caucus which had delivered all of the votes against the bill.

[Rep. Paul Condino](#) (D-Southfield) then stood up and asked the bill sponsor, [Rep. Leslie Mortimer](#) (R-Horton) to explain her bill, an offer of which she declined.

Instead, [Rep. Bruce Caswell](#) (R-Hillsdale) rose in support of the bill saying that having the drug test, in cooperation with a case management system enacted under the Department of Community Health's budget, will allow the state to know which people are substance abusers and provide them with the treatment they need.

The state currently can test recipients for drugs under a consent order from 2003, though that expires in January 2007.

CHILDREN'S OMBUDSMAN MOVE: The House also gave 64-40 approval to [HB 6440](#), which requires that by October 1, 2007, the state's Office of Children's Ombudsman be under the realm of the Legislative Council and Legislative Service Bureau.

On the floor, Democrats argued that having the ombudsman's office aligned with the Legislature could be more detrimental because of the partisanship and the possibility funding could be yanked, as was the case for the corrections ombudsman and consumer protection office a few years back.

"This is too important to put at risk. The Legislature can change every two years, but the need to protect our children never goes away," said Rep. Barb Farrah (D-Southgate).

But [Rep. John Stahl](#) (R-North Branch) said the issue of transferring the ombudsman's office has been brought up for several years and that in the wake of cases such as Ricky Holland, "Our children of Michigan have been put on the shelf for too long."

And [Rep. Barb Vander Veen](#) (R-Allendale) said that it was offensive to consider the legislation a power grab because, “It’s about freeing the children’s ombudsman.”

[Rep. Brenda Clack](#) (D-Flint) insisted, “There’s no evidence of tampering this office by the governor.”

The bill sponsor, [Rep. David Law](#) (R-Commerce Township), said the proposal is needed because lawmakers need to know what the problems of a system are in order to fix them.

“Burying our collective heads in the sand is not going to do anything,” he said.

Nine Democrats joined majority Republicans in support of the bill: [Rep. Glenn Anderson](#) (D-Westland), [Rep. Kathy Angerer](#) (D-Dundee), [Rep. Pam Byrnes](#) (D-Chelsea), [Rep. Marie Donigan](#) (D-Royal Oak), [Rep. John Espinoza](#) (D-Croswell), [Rep. Gary McDowell](#) (D-Rudyard), [Rep. Joel Sheltrown](#) (D-West Branch), [Rep. Dudley Spade](#) (D-Tipton) and [Rep. Carl Williams](#) (D-Saginaw).

STUDENT PROTECTION: The House also unanimously approved a package of bills that would allow a school superintendent or his or her designee to apply for a student body protection court order against individuals convicted of certain sex crimes: [HB 6403](#), [HB 6404](#), [HB 6405](#) and [HB 6406](#). That individual would not be allowed to be within 1,000 feet of school property under the order.

HB 6403 was amended to include individuals who are not students but are manufacturing, possessing, soliciting or delivering controlled substances under the student body protection order.



JENNIFER M. GRANHOLM
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MICHIGAN DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN SERVICES
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MARIANNE UDOW
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News Release

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Genesee Scholars make the grade with stable living arrangements

September 21, 2006

LANSING -- Providing families with stable living arrangements helps children perform better in school, a two-year study of Flint elementary students has shown.

The Genesee Scholars Project started in fall 2004 with a basic goal to determine if decreasing the mobility of the students would result in higher test scores. The program was a partnership between the parents of the scholars, Flint Community Schools, local landlords and the Michigan Department of Human Services. The program was funded by the Michigan State Housing Development Authority.

"What seems to have a significant impact on helping students improve their school performance is stabilizing them in their home," DHS Director Marianne Udow said. "By focusing on providing financial assistance to help them remain in their homes, we also help children obtain a better education. This is a critical connection to stemming generational poverty."

Families of children in two second grade elementary classrooms at Flint's Bryant and Washington Elementary Schools were paid a \$100 monthly stipend as an incentive to remain in the same living arrangement for the two years of the study. Additionally, the students and teachers in the pilot classrooms remained the same. This group of students was dubbed the Genesee Scholars.

At the end of the third grade, Genesee Scholars and non-scholars were compared on several factors. The results showed:

- The Genesee Scholars far exceeded their non-scholar peers and all Flint School District third graders on the Michigan Education Assessment Program (MEAP) test scores. The scholars' subject test scores were comparable to all students in the Genesee Intermediate School District and the rest of Michigan third graders.
- The Genesee Scholars consistently showed greater improvement in Standardized Testing and Reporting (STAR) reading tests compared to non-scholars.
- During the study period, non-scholars moved out of the classroom at a rate almost two and a half times greater than the scholars.

For more information go to www.michigan.gov/dhs

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